



U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms and Explosives

Martinsburg, WV 25405

www.atf.gov

903050:MRC
3311/301179

Mr. Jason Davis
Davis & Associates
27201 Puerta Real
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Mission Viejo, CA 92691

Dear Mr. Davis,

This is in reference to your letter dated March 4, 2014, requesting reconsideration of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) determination that the EP80 prototype submitted by EP Arms, LLC. (EP Arms) is classified as a "firearm receiver" under the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA). The basis for your request is your belief that ATF's assumptions concerning the manufacturing process for the EP80 were integral to our determination that the prototype constitutes a firearm for purposes of the GCA. That is not correct. To the extent ATF made assumptions about the manufacturing process, it was because details about that process were not provided with the July 30, 2013, request for classification. In any event, for the reasons articulated below, the details provided in your March 4, 2014, letter do not change our ultimate conclusion that the EP80 is a firearm receiver under the GCA.

As you are aware, the GCA, 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(3), defines the term "**firearm**" as follows: ...*(A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device. Such term does not include an antique firearm.* Further, GCA implementing regulations, 27 CFR § 478.11, define "firearm frame or receiver" as "that part of a firearm which provides housing for the hammer, bolt or breechblock, and firing mechanism, and which is usually threaded at its forward portion to receive the barrel."

Our examination of this EP80 prototype submitted by EP Arms confirmed that it had the following features and characteristics:

1. Magazine well.
2. Magazine catch.
3. Bolt catch.
4. Pistol grip.
5. Forming and tapping for receiver-extension/buffer tube.
6. Front pivot-pin hole.
7. Rear take-down hole.
8. Holes drilled for the detent take-down and pivot pin, retainer buffer, detent fire-control selector and pistol-grip screw.

Further examination by the Firearms Technology Branch (FTB) revealed that excess material extended past the exterior walls of the casting, indicating the approximate locations of the holes to be drilled for the selector, hammer, and trigger pins.

In our initial classification this office included analysis of two separate and distinct issues. First, we advised that the EP Arms submission was a firearm receiver because the fire control cavity was created during the manufacturing process and was later filled with polymer—the item referred to in your appeal as the “biscuit.” *In addition*, we noted that filling the fire control cavity with plastic was not sufficient to destroy the firearm.

You have not appealed this determination as being incorrect, but are appealing the determination that the EP80 receiver is a firearm because the manufacturing process differs from what is described in our determination letter. In your request for reconsideration, you describe that during the manufacturing process, the area comprising the fire control cavity is formed around a nylon core that you refer to as a “biscuit” and that at no stage in the manufacturing is the EP80 “back filled.”

We previously advised that “the filling of the cavity at a later point does not change our classification....ATF has long held that this is not sufficient to destroy the receiver and remove the item from classification as a ‘frame or receiver.’” We included this analysis to address any contention that inserting the biscuit would remove the item from classification as a firearm receiver.

However, based upon your newly supplied description of the EP Arms manufacturing process, we agree that this aspect of our analysis is not applicable to the EP80, as the biscuit is not meant to destroy the firearm. In fact, we understand that your contention is that this process prevents the item from reaching a stage of manufacture in which it may be classified as a “firearm receiver” claiming that “[a]t no time is a fire-control cavity formed during the manufacturing process....In fact; at no time does a fire-control cavity exist in the manufacturing process.” We disagree.

The EP Arms manufacturing process represents a change from the processes by which AR-type firearms have historically been produced. ATF has long held that items such as receiver blanks—“castings” or “machined bodies” in which the fire-control cavity area is

completely solid and un-machined – have not yet reached a “stage of manufacture” to be classified as a “firearm receiver.” These items are a *single piece of metal* that require a substantial amount of machining to the vital areas of the firearm. In your request for reconsideration, you noted several letters in which FTB determined that certain submissions were not firearm receivers. However, in each of those examples the fire-control cavity was the same material as the receiver itself and the material filling the fire-control cavity is integral to the item; therefore the fire-control “cavity” had not been created.

To illustrate, photo 1 is a receiver “blank.” This is not classified as a “firearm receiver” because the fire-control cavity has not been machined in any way. It is a single piece of metal from which a firearm receiver may be produced through further machining.

Location of the Fire Control Cavity

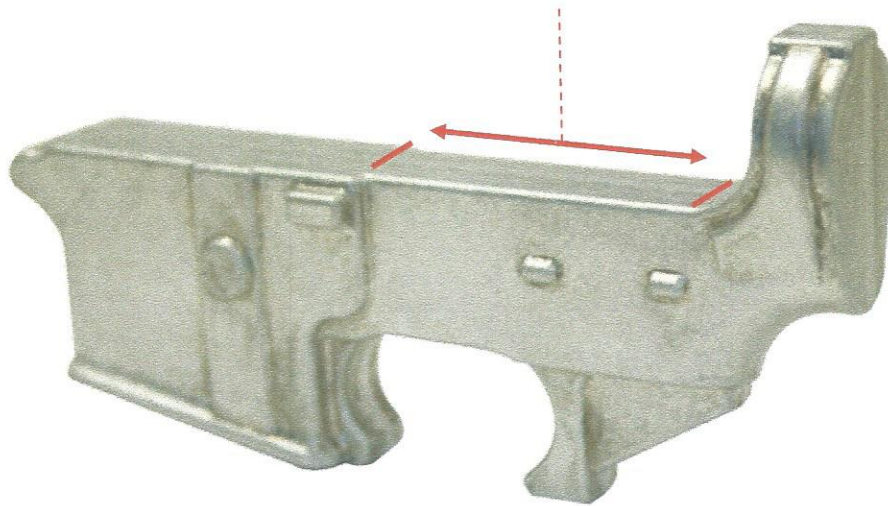


Photo 1

To further illustrate this difference between the EP Arms manufacturing process and traditional metal “castings” or “machined bodies,” consider the following. Photo 2 is an AR-type receiver with a fully machined fire-control cavity. The red box outlines the cavity. This is classified as a firearm receiver pursuant to the GCA.

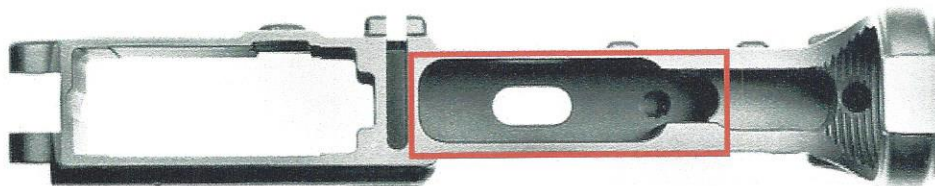


Photo 2

Photo 3 is an example of the EP Arms submission. The “biscuit” is the white portion—the exact size and dimensions of the functional fire-control cavity. Notice that the biscuit outlines the fire-control cavity as shown in photo 2.

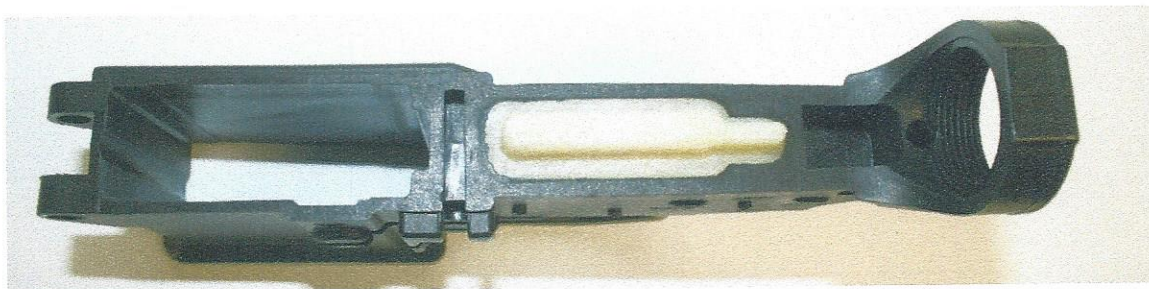


Photo 3

Photo 4 is a side-view of the EP Arms design. The top sample is made of clear plastic and shows that the biscuit creates the internal dimensions of the fire-control cavity.



Photo 4

The photos illustrate that the EP Arms manufacturing process creates a fire-control cavity through the use of a “biscuit.”

Accordingly, based upon your description of the EP Arms manufacturing process, the EP Arms submission is distinguishable from other “castings” or “blanks” that are not

classified as firearms. Unlike “castings” or “blanks” which are formed as a single piece so that a fire-control cavity has not been made, EP Arms uses the biscuit specifically to create that fire-control cavity during the injection molding process. As described in your letter, it appears that the sole purpose of the “biscuit” is to differentiate the fire-control area from the rest of the receiver and thus facilitate the process of making the receiver into a functional firearm. ATF has long held that “indexing” of the fire-control area is sufficient to require classification as a firearm receiver. Based upon the EP Arms manufacturing process, it is clear that the “biscuit” serves to index the entire fire-control cavity. In fact, the biscuit is meant to differentiate the fire-control cavity from the rest of the firearm so that it may be easily identified and removed to create a functional firearm. See photo 5.



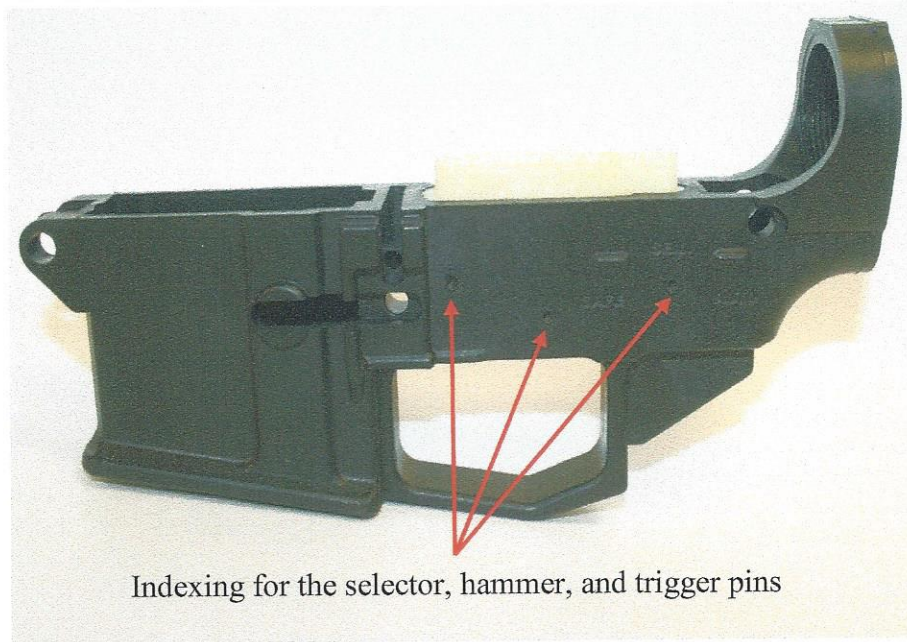
Photo 5

Therefore, the submitted sample is properly classified as a “firearm” as defined in 18 U.S.C. 921(a)(3) because the fire-control area is created during the manufacturing process through the use of the biscuit.

In addition to the formation of the fire-control cavity in the manufacturing process, your manufacturing process results in “excess material extending past the exterior walls of the casting, indicating the approximate locations of the holes to be drilled for the selector, hammer, and trigger pins.” Based upon our previous understanding of the EP Arms manufacturing process, we did not analyze whether this excess material, on its own, would be sufficient to warrant classifying the EP80 as a firearm receiver. However, to remove any doubt about the correctness of our classification decision, we are including that analysis here.

The AR-15 platform is a two-part system generally comprised of a lower and an upper assembly. The lower assembly is classified as the receiver and a “firearm” because it provides the housing for the hammer and the firing mechanism, and contains mounting points for the upper assembly which accepts the barrel and houses the bolt or

breechblock. As stated above, an AR-15 receiver blank is not classified by ATF as a firearm. The point in the manufacturing process at which an AR-15 blank is classified as a firearm is when it has been indexed for or machined in the fire-control recess area. Such a receiver may also have had other machining performed, such as drilled pivot-pin and takedown-pin hole(s). However, based upon your explanation of the manufacturing process, this excess material indexing the location for the holes to be drilled is, by itself, sufficient to classify the sample as a firearm receiver. See photo 6, below.



Indexing for the selector, hammer, and trigger pins

Photo 6

If you require further information concerning our findings, we can be contacted at any time.

Sincerely yours,


Earl Griffith
Chief, Firearms Technology Branch